

CONTEMPORARY JACQUARD DESIGNS FOR HANDLOOM

BROCADE SARIS OF VARANASI

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ABSTRACT

The world of craft is as valuable as that of the world of science, philosophy or ethics; it reflects the state of human society through an individual. Craft in India is more of a system than a product where aesthetic and function have been an integral part of utility. Creation of any craft never takes place in isolation. It is part of a dense matrix of religious, cultural and social beliefs of historical factors of a body of norms and values (Shali, 1988). Uttar Pradesh has a dynamic potential for keeping safe our years back heritage art and craft. Varanasi is a hub of brocade textiles since ages and their weavers are capable of producing different designs for handloom brocade. Chowkpurana folk art is a religious drawing which is done to decorate the floors and walls of mud house on various occasions by the women. The design and motifs of Chowkpurana floor art has distinctive vocabulary. In this study an effort was made to introduce Chowkpurana floor art motifs for handloom brocade saris.

Multivisit approach and observation method was adopted for collecting the data. Three different layouts (1. motifs with border, pallav and all over ground, 2. motifs with pallav and border, 3 Motif with border, pallav and pleats) were sketched. Opinions of experts (master weavers) were taken for selecting the layout, raw materials and weaving technique of sari. Alaipura area of Varanasi and Pheka technique was selected for weaving of sari. The motif was selected from Ahoi Astmi function and was placed over the border and pallav, produced in organza variety. Prototype costing was also calculated for Chowkpurana brocade sari.

KEYWORDS: Chowkpurana, Brocade, Phekwa Technique

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INTRODUCTION

The culture of India has grown over more than 5000 years, absorbing ideas and values from other civilizations and people, modifying it in order to suit the needs of the times but always retaining the unbroken thread of its own tradition. Her roots are so deeply embedded in the soil of history that the people are not easily swayed by every passing sociological or political fashion of the time. It is layers and layers of what has been contributed by mankind over a period of time and this particular pyramid does not end in a small peak but continues to grow like a pillar. Our intangible heritage includes folklore and crafts which has indigenous knowledge systems and historical memories of thousands of years (**K. Satchidanandan and Cour, 2010**). Banaras „Kashi“ the literature compares it with the oldest cities of human civilization like Jerusalem, Rome, Peking, and Athens so on. Perhaps this city is the only example of continuous culture over the last three thousand years. The ancient, glorious and vibrant Banaras silk handloom saris are closely woven and designed with gold

and silver, passed down from generation to generation. It was one of the sectors important for its high value addition, both in terms of economic and aesthetics. These days the weavers of handloom brocade are facing stiff competition from the power loom substitute. Despite the government subsidies available, handloom brocade weaving is declining; therefore, there is a need for strategic designing and marketing interventions. *Chowkpurana* floor art of Uttar Pradesh is a traditional drawing done by the rural women on various rituals occasions (*Diwali, Karwachaudh, Ahoi Astmi and Holi*) on the wall and floor of mud houses. The design/motifs of floor art have not been explored till date; an effort is made in this study to design a handloom sari by incorporating *Chowkpurana* motifs with brocade technique. The investigator observed and documented few preliminary steps needed to be taken for execution of the newer design for Varanasi handloom brocade.

METHODOLOGY

Collection of *Chowkpurana* Floor art Motifs

The researcher visited interior villages like *Madawali* and *Basai* of Western Uttar Pradesh for the collection of *Chowkpurana* floor art motifs. Villages were selected on the basis of frequently drawing of floor art. For present study various kinds of Ahoi Astmi motifs were gathered with the help of a canon camera of 10 mega pixel. Multi field visit, observation method along with interview schedule was implemented for acquiring the first hand data.

Designing of Handloom sari with the Placement of *Chowkpurana* Motifs

Varanasi is known for handloom brocade saris in various varieties all over India with typical floral, animal, bird and geometrical motifs. In this study, the collected *Chowkpurana* motifs were incorporated into the design vocabulary of the handloom Banarasi brocade saris. Indian sari is basically divided into three parts: Field, Pallav and Border where design is integrated. Four different motifs were collected during diwali occasion from both villages (*Chawli* and *Gharijassa*) out of which one motif was purposively selected for designing of sari. Motifs were transferred from photograph to paper in to their original shape as motifs were resized according to the saris layout. The three placements of *Chowkpurana* motifs over sari which were selected are as follows:

- Motifs with border and pallav
- Motif with ornamented field, pallav and border
- Motifs with border, pallav and pleats

Preparation of Graph, Punch Card, Loom and Technique

Rewari Talab area of Varanasi was selected for weaving of brocade sari. The craftsmen of this area first looked at the size of design/motifs on paper for choosing the graph dimension and jacquard capacity of pit loom. Once the graph was prepared, it was taken for punch card cutting. Raw materials for manufacturing brocade sari were procured from the local market of Varanasi.

Development of a Handloom Brocade Sari

Few preparatory processes were done for instance threading of yarns, setting up of punch card over jacquard machine according to the variety of brocade. *Phekwa* techniques were adopted for transferring of *Chowkpurana* design for brocade saris. The length and width of selected sari was kept 5.30 meter 46””.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- Analysis of collected *Chowkpurana* floor art motifs
- Layout of handloom brocade sari with the placement of *Chowkpurana* motifs
- Raw material, technique and cost of producing handloom brocade sari from a newer design

Analysis of Collected *Chowkpurana* Floor art Motifs

Findings unveiled that *Chowkpurana* floor art was done on various occasions for instance

Holi (*playing with vibrant colour*), *Ahoi Aathe* (*women keep fast for their son*), *Nag Panchami* (*worship of snake*) and *Karva Chauth* (*women keep fast for their husband*). Diwali (*celebration of lights*) is celebrated in almost every region of India. It was found that drawing of chowk was mandatory for them, moreover was considered as part of their worship. The configuration of design/motifs was also being changed according to festivals. The analyzed *Chowkpurana* designs were symbolic geometrical patterns which included lines, dots, squares, circles, triangles. The motifs used were swastika, lotus, fish, conch shell, footprints (goddess Lakshmi), creepers, leaves, trees, flowers, animals and anthropomorphic figures. These motifs often were modified to fit in with the local images and rhythms. One important point was that the entire pattern was an unbroken line. Geometrical patterns took the shape of stylized flowers of all kinds, fruits, animals, fish and birds. Traditionally, Muslim craftsmen who were from handloom industry of Varanasi avoided weaving of human figure as it was considered forbidden in the community however, the master weavers were very well aware of requirement of newer designs for the handloom industry to keep going. Eventually they got convinced to adopt innovative design for acquiring the markets trends (Figure 1).

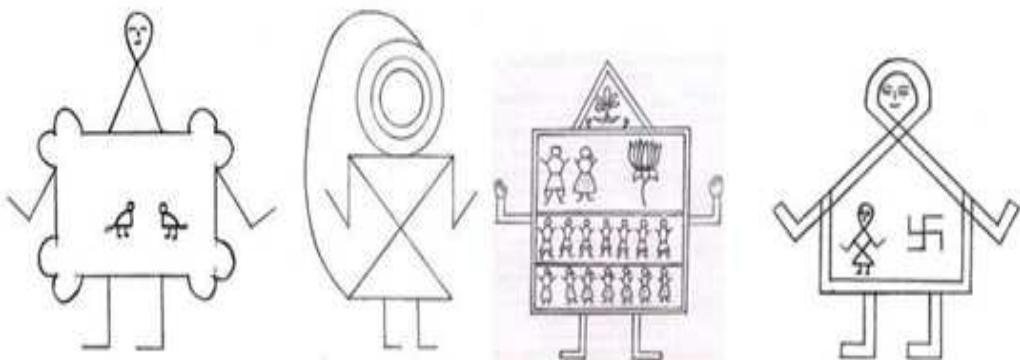


Figure 1: Motifs of *Chowkpurana* Floor art on Ahoi Astmi

Layout of Handloom Brocade Sari with the Placement of *Chowkpurana* Motifs

The researcher solicitously placed *Chowkpurana* floor art motifs over the sari layout after considering the draping style of the region (Figure 2).

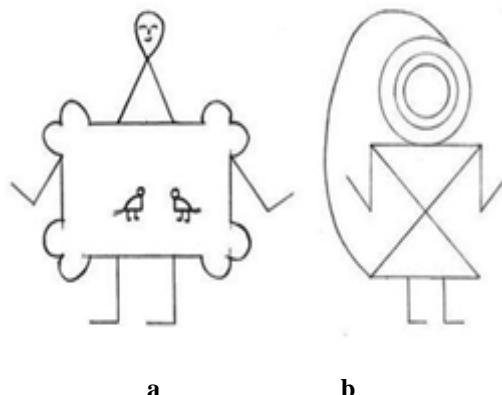


Figure 2: Selected Motifs for Weaving

A total of three placements of motif were sketched on paper:

- Diwali motifs on border, pallav and field
- Diwali motifs on border and pallav
- Diwali motifs on border, pleats and pallav

All three layouts were shown to experts and one layout of sari was chosen out of three for weaving. Varanasi handloom weavers have few prior specific steps for weaving:

Step 1: Illustration of design on paper, (Figure 3, 4 and 5)

Step 2: Transferring of design from paper to graph paper, (Figure 6, 7 and 8)

Step 3: Preparations of punch card and pit loom, (Plate 1, 2 and 3)

Step 4: Weaving of sari (Plate 4 and 5)

Step 1: Illustration of Design on Paper

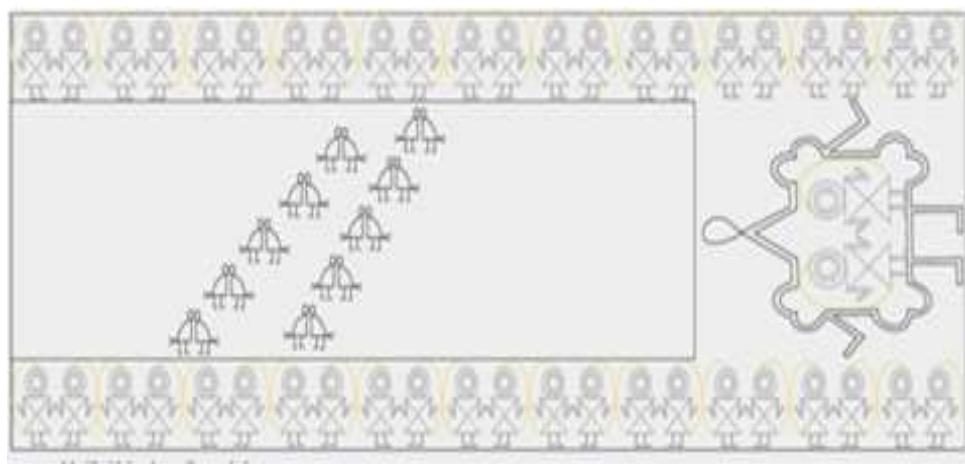


Figure 3: Ahoi Astmi Motif on with Border, Pallav and Pleats



**Figure 4: Ahoi Astmi Motif on with Border and Pallav
*Selected for Weaving**

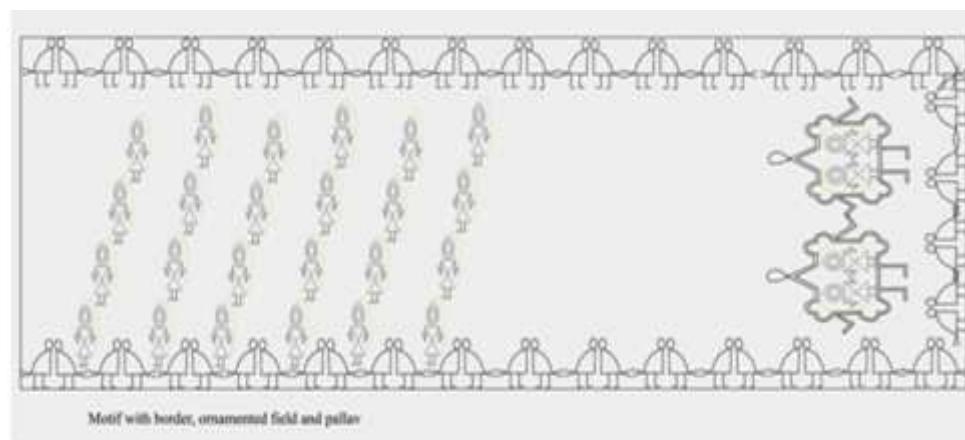


Figure 5: Ahoi Astmi Motifs on Border, Ornamented Field and Pallav

Step 2: Transferring of Design from Paper to Graph Paper

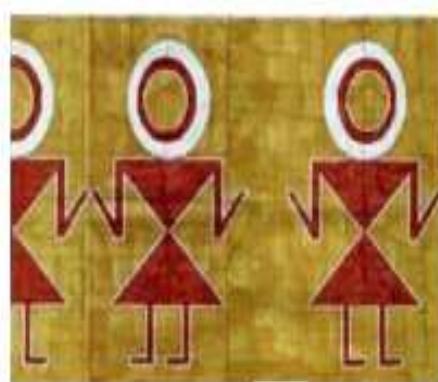


Figure 6: Prepared Graph



Figure 7: Prepared Graph for Pallav, for Crosswise Border,

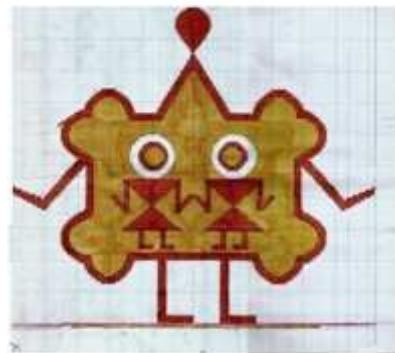


Figure 8: Prepared Graph for Lengthwise Border

Step 3: Preparations of Punch Card



Plate 1: Plain Card Board



Plate 2: Hammer for Cutting The Punch Card



Plate 3: Punch Card Cutter giving Sequestional



Figure 9

Step 4: Weaving of Sari



Plate 4: Chowkpurana Handloom Brocade Sari Inspired from Ahoi Astmi Festival

Figure 10

Raw Materials for Chowkpurana Handloom Brocade Sari

Raw materials were selected on the basis of their availability. *Chowkpurana* is a theme based floor art, each colour used in chowk has its own significant value. Generally *Chowkpurana* were drawn over a white surface of wall/floor therefore the base of the sari was kept white (Table 1).

Table 1: Selected Handloom Specification for Chowkpurana Brocade Sari

1. Variety	Organza	
2. Placement of motifs	Motifs with pallav and border	
3. Technique	<i>Phekwa</i>	
4. Weave	Plain and Twill	
5. Reed	116s	
6. Jacquard machine capacity used	Border-160 Hook, Pallav-240 Hook, double naka, Pointed Jaldar	
7. Ends/ Inch	100	
Picks/ Inch	80	
8. Raw material	Undegummed silk warp & weft	
9. Count of yarn	Warp-20/22, Weft-20/22, Extra weft: 120/2 spun silk, 140/2 spun silk	
10. Length of sari	5.30"	
11. Width of sari	45***	
12. Lengthwise border	6.5 cm	
Crosswise border	10.5 cm	
13. Length of Pallav	73 cm	
14. Colour	Off white base, Extra weft: Red, Yellow, Black spun silk	
15. Time taken	25 days	
16. Place of Manufacturing	Rewari Talab, Varanasi, India	
17. Proto type Manufacturing cost of saree	Price (Rs.)	

Table 1: Contd.,		
a.	Loom set up	2200
b.	Graph manufacturing	5000
c.	Punch card	7479
d.	Weaving wages and raw material	5700
	Total	Rs. 20,739

Production Cost of Handloom

The master weaver stated that the manufacturing cost of first sari was expensive as compared to other saris to be woven, as weavers took more time to weave the initial one owing to complexity of design pattern. Once the weaver understood the design pattern he took less time in weaving. The master weaver calculated the total cost of manufacturing of first sari on the basis of its wages, punch card cost, graph manufacturing cost, raw material cost, loom set up cost on the other hand at the time of production of the saris, he eliminated the loom set up charge, punch card and graph manufacturing cost along with reduced weaving wages as compared to prior one.

Step 4: Development of Sari

Master weavers and weavers worked together and successfully incorporated Chowkpurana motifs on border and pallav through *Phekwa* in organza variety. The length of sari was 5.30 meter, below lengthwise border was 9" above lengthwise border was 6.5", and *pallav* was 73cm (Plate 5).

CONCLUSIONS

Newer design for handloom industry is the prime concern of master weaver to attract the younger generation towards rich textiles of Varanasi. They always seek for innovative design for handloom thus Varanasi master weavers remains first in the world for their contribution and adapting newer form of design according to requirement of time. The study was concluded that execution of newer design for Varanasi handloom was a combined effort of master weavers, weaver and designers as without their inherited skill it is impossible to innovate anything on handloom. It was a good sign and opportunity as those designs and motifs were refused earlier for weaving by handloom weaver.

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